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AUTHOR Welch, Olga M.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

In order to examine the relationship between the development of academic self-esteem and a climate of excellence in the classroom this study compared the experiences of a group of high school students in their two inner-city Knoxville (Tennessee) high schools with their corresponding experiences in a University of Tennessee (Knoxville) sponsored enrichment program, EXCEL. Project EXCEL seeks to provide enrichment for college-bound high school students, emphasizing academic excellence and the internal motivation needed to attain it. Data collection included classroom observations over a 3-year period, in-depth interviews with students and EXCEL teachers, documents related to student performance, and curriculum guides. Thirteen students and four teachers participated in the study. Qualitative analysis of these data indicate the following: (1) academic learning is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic tasks; (2) students' on-task behavior is significantly influenced by teacher-directed learning that is structured, includes corrective feedback, and monitors progress; and (3) development of academic self-esteem was generated through a congruence between teacher philosophy and practice. Further, teacher directed and guided activities can facilitate the construction of personal definitions of scholarship indicating that student development of academic self-esteem may be generated through a combination of factors. Included are 28 references. (JB)

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Diffusing the Rumors of Inferiority: Creating a Climate of Excellence for Inner-City, College Bound Students

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Olga M. Welch, Ed.D.
Carolyn R. Hodges, Ph.D.
University of Tennessee
Knoxville

Jan Henderson, Ed.D.
Central Florida Community College
Ocala

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Abstract

The number of Black students entering and completing college continues to decline. Among the several reasons cited are the lack of pre-college preparation during the high school years, the identification by minority students of high achievement as "acting White" (and therefore, unacceptable) and the unfamiliarity of minority students with the college experience (Allen, 1986; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Stikes, 1984).

Project EXCEL, a six-year research project under the auspices of The University of Tennessee (Knoxville), examines the relationship between academic self-esteem and pre-college enrichment in reading, writing, and foreign languages.

The paper focuses on one aspect of the study; a comparison between the regular classroom experiences (English) of the students in two inner-city high schools with their corresponding experiences (English) in the university-sponsored enrichment program, Project EXCEL. Using classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and analysis of on/off task behavior rates in the two programs, the researchers investigated the relationship between a climate of excellence in the classroom and the development of academic self-esteem in the EXCEL students.

Qualitative analysis of these data yielded the following conclusions: (a) that academic learning is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic tasks; (b) that students on-task behavior is significantly influenced by teacher-directed learning which is structured, includes corrective feedback, and monitoring of progress; and (c) that development of academic self-esteem (pilot students) was generated through a congruence between teacher philosophy and practice

**Diffusing the Rumors of Inferiority:
Creating a Climate of Excellence for Inner-City,
College Bound Students**

Creating educational environments which adequately prepare individuals for college remains a persistent challenge. For minorities whose numbers in higher education continue to decline, creating such environments has assumed even greater urgency. Recent examinations of academic preparation for this population reveal disturbing findings. There is compelling evidence that the educational gains of Black Americans are being steadily eroded at every level of schooling. Despite recent desegregation efforts, Blacks who attend predominately White schools receive an education which is different and inferior. As an illustration, Irvine (1990) cites the following data from the College Board (1985) and the Carnegie Quarterly (1984/85):

> Black students, particularly black male students are three times as likely to be in a class for the educable mentally retarded as are white students, but only one-half as likely to be in a class for the gifted and talented. This under-representation can be seen in Prince George County, Maryland (49 percent vs. 14 percent), Dade County, Florida (20 percent vs. 5 percent), Duval County Florida (35 percent vs 4 percent), and New Orleans (84 percent vs. 26 percent).
>
> Black students are more likely than white students to be enrolled in general and vocational tracks and take fewer academically rigorous courses. Only 33 percent of blacks are enrolled in college preparatory classes compared to 52 percent of Asians and 40 percent of whites.
>
> Even when the course titles are similar, the content for black and white students varies (Oakes, 1988 as cited in Irvine). Black students are more likely to be enrolled in business or general math and less likely to be in algebra, geometry, trigonometry or calculus. In the general courses, emphasis is given to memorization of discrete pieces of information rather than on problem-solving and abstract reasoning, the skills most often needed in college classrooms. (p.iv.)

In higher education, the findings are even more alarming.

> "In the late seventies, slightly over 50 percent of African-American high school graduates entered college. By the early eighties, the proportion of African-Americans entering college had dropped to 36 percent" (White & Parham, 1970, p.88).

Further, those who complete four-year programs do so in education, humanities or the social sciences, while degrees in mathematics, sciences, and computer sciences are most often procured from historically black rather than white institutions. Allen (1984 as cited in Irvine) concludes that half of the Black students entering white institutions never graduate. While this information underscores the severity of the decline in Black college attendance, it does not explain it.

In recent years, attention has been focused on the relationship between the decline in Black academic achievement and college admission and the quality of pre-college education. Several programs aimed at providing enrichment have been developed. Generally, these programs offer additional experiences for students in mathematics, science and English which prepare them to make the transition from high school to college. While few would argue that a sound academic foundation is crucial to that transition, there is some question as to whether academics alone assure a student's graduation. The number of students who complete such programs only to drop out of college or, in cases where they do remain, to perform poorly, would suggest otherwise. Emphasis on academic preparation without equal attention to a strong sense of identity, ignores a significant factor in these students' adjustment to college life (Vaz, 1987, Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Allen, 1986). Certainly the student, minority or otherwise, with a sense of identity based on a strong, positive self-concept and who is motivated to excel academically is best prepared to face the challenge of developing a "collegiate" or "professional" self (Welch, Hodges, & Warden, 1989). Yet, neither precollege enrichment programs nor college preparatory classes are able to give more than incidental attention to this aspect of

academic training. For Black youth, the process is further complicated by a deficit model which underestimates their ability and which contributes to an internalization of intellectual inferiority. Howard and Hammond characterize this phenomenon as the "rumor of inferiority," and advance the following hypothesis by way of explanation:

> (1) Black performance problems are caused in large part by a tendency to avoid intellectual competition. (2) This tendency is a psychological phenomenon that arises when the larger society projects an image of black intellectual inferiority and then that image is internalized by Black people. (3) Imputing intellectual inferiority to genetic causes, especially in the face of data confirming poorer performance, intensifies the fears and doubts that surround the issue (p.19).

It is this process which causes some Black students to disengage from competition with whites, even when they possess the abilities to do so. Race, which should enhance individuality, instead becomes the reason (excuse) for lack of individuality (Howard & Hammond, 1985; Castile & Kishner, 1981; Ogbu, 1974).

For "at risk" Black adolescents, the message of inferiority or incompetence reinforced by subtle racism and lack of educational parity with Whites, combine to produce half-hearted attempts at scholarship and the adoption of sophisticated self-handicapping strategies.

Education as the key to socio-economic advancement is also problematic for many Black adolescents. Despite the value placed on education in the Black community, they remain skeptical of its actual relationship to social and economic equality with Whites. According to White (1984, 1990), Leacock (1969), and Taylor (1989), the achievement motivation hypothesis, with its conception of schools as meritocracies in which each child who works, persists and competes can succeed, is realized only when children view education as a viable means to advancement. As White (1984) notes:

> Black children see unemployed and underemployed high school, trade school, and even college graduates every day throughout the Black community. They recognize that no direct correlation exists between academic success and either social or financial advancement. From their perspective, then, it makes little sense to concentrate on academic achievement when there is little assurance that their efforts will pay off (p.122).

These findings underscore the complexity of the problems of Black underachievement, while arguing for a re-examination of the educational process for those with college aspirations. More particularly, it argues for research into the kinds of educational experiences which Black students receive at both the elementary and secondary levels which result in inadequate academic preparation.

This paper compares the regular classroom experiences (English) of students in two inner-city high schools with their corresponding experiences in a university-sponsored enrichment program, Project EXCEL.

Project EXCEL

Under the auspices of the University of Tennessee, Project Excel seeks to provide enrichment for college-bound high school students, stressing academic excellence as well as the internal motivation needed to attain it. The four-year program targets Black students at the sophomore level and seeks to improve their chances for successful college admission and matriculation by providing: (a) a strong pre-college program emphasizing reading, writing, and foreign language skills; (b) a means to "demystify" the college experience by offering the students simulated college lectures, seminars, and assignments given by University of Tennessee faculty from a variety of disciplines; and (c) assistance in developing appropriate career paths by involving them early in personal goal setting and investigation of various career options.

Central to all these goals is the development of academic ethos, that is, a personal definition of scholarship and scholars which each student constructs over the course of the program. In a sense, academic ethos (self-esteem) is analogous to achievement motivation, involving as it does "the personal commitment to a standard of excellence, the willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process" (McClelland et al., 1953, Atkinson, 1966, as cited in White, 1984, p. 121). Students participate in an academic program which stresses self-management, risk-taking, and goal-setting. Reading, writing, and foreign languages (German or French) are studied, rather than mathematics and/or science, because the skills developed within them have cross-disciplinary application. For Black students engaged in constructing personal definitions of achievement, establishing the relevance and utility of what they learn are important considerations. Equally important to that construction is the discipline to do scholarly work provided in the academic program. Participation in the academic program is also designed to broaden the students' sense of future options, giving added meaning to the career development and community service projects through which they find ways to apply their skills as individuals. Thus, the researchers hypothesized that the more the students increased their academic skills, knowledge of career opportunities, and understanding of their community obligations, the more personally strengthened would become their attitude toward scholarship, as well as their confidence in themselves as developing scholars.

Eleven college-bound sophomores participate in the program. They were selected from the total population of sophomores at two inner-city high schools in the Knoxville area. The small number of participants allows for the in-depth interviewing and in-school observation

methods employed by the researchers. The participants met the following criteria: (a) 2.5/4.0 overall grade point average in academic course work; (b) successful completion of the Tennessee Proficiency Test, a basic skills test in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies required for graduation from high school; (c) reading at grade level; and (d) a stated desire to attend college. All students who met the criteria were eligible to apply.

Applications were distributed by the guidance counselors to all interested students at the two schools. A total of 50 applications were returned from both schools. After review of written materials by the 10 members of the EXCEL Advisory Board (civic leaders in business and education), 25 were recommended for further consideration. These individuals and their parents were interviewed separately by the Project Directors and EXCEL teachers. Of the 25 recommended, 14 participants were selected: 10 Black females, 2 White females, and 2 Black males. (Note: in the initial pool of 50 students, 10 were Black males, no White males applied, and all but one of these males self-selected out of the project because of conflicts with athletics or failed to meet the minimum criteria.) Two weeks into the program, the remaining Black male self-selected out, giving as his reason a decision to pursue a career in electronics rather than attending college. Although the remaining 13 students met the minimum criteria for selection, they were not the students with the highest G.P.A.'s in the sophomore classes of either high school.

Rationale for Studying Classroom Climate

Prior to the implementation of Project EXCEL, a pilot program was conducted. Fourteen Black students from Augustana High School (one of the two inner-city high schools in the

current project) participated in a prototype of the academic program for Project EXCEL. At the end of the three year period, eleven of the original fourteen completed the project.

To determine its effect on student admission to and retention in college, a follow-up study was conducted. Six of the eleven students, including one male, have completed their junior year in college on scholarships and in good academic standing. Of the remaining five participants, two males entered and received promotions in the military, one having recently secured a scholarship to pursue a degree in forestry. Another female has become the only Black in the region selected to enter the FBI training program, while the remaining two females are employed in the private sector and pursuing education on a part-time basis.

Data collected on the students one year after the pilot project suggested that they identified themselves as scholars regardless of whether or not they had entered or remained in college. Moreover, they credited this to the classroom climate created by the EXCEL teachers, particularly in English. They mentioned the calibre of the written assignments as well as the high performance expectations which this individual provided. In subsequent interviews, the participants also contrasted this climate with that found in their regular, high school English classes. Since this teacher only interacted with the EXCEL students during the summer, the researchers were interested in: (a) examining the patterns of operation employed by this teacher, (b) examining the patterns of operation employed in college preparatory English classes in the two high schools in which the EXCEL students were enrolled, (c) comparing and contrasting the experiences in the two settings, (d) determining which (if any) of the experiences identified by the Pilot EXCEL students as contributing to classroom climate are specific to one setting or

common to both, (d) determining the potential impact of the identified experiences on student performance.

Such a study has particular implications for investigations of Black academic underachievement since many minority children in high school feel they have the ability to learn but also feel that somebody blocks their success (Patton, Walberg, & Yeh (1973) as cited in Wittrock).

Methods and Data Collection

Procedures

Findings from Pilot Project EXCEL suggested that students developed academic self-esteem during their participation in the project. Moreover, they attributed this in part to the classroom climate created by the EXCEL teachers. While research exists on the effects of classroom climate (Brophy & Evertson, 1986; Soar & Soar (1979); Stallings & Kasowitz (1974); Jackson, (1968)), factors which result in the development of academic self-esteem are a relatively unexplored topic in the literature. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was selected because it allows the process and research questions to emerge.

Data Collection

Data collection methods included classroom observations, in-depth interviews with students and EXCEL teachers, as well as documents related to student performance. Curriculum guides were also collected and analyzed.

Initially, classroom observations were conducted by one of the researchers over a three year period, using a modification of the Project STAR Observation Form (Evertson & Brophy, 1980). They included a written description of the physical facilities in the EXCEL classroom

as well as the English classrooms in the two high schools, teacher and student behaviors (verbal and non-verbal), teacher instructional and classroom management techniques, and teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student interactions. The form also allowed the researcher to note times when particular activities were observed and to record, at five minute intervals, student on/off task behavior rates. Only students that were obviously on-task or off-task were tallied in those categories. If there was doubt, students were recorded as probably on-task. Students who had no assigned activity were tallied as waiting.

Data Analysis

To arrive at emerging patterns of teacher and student behaviors, observational data were analyzed inductively using approaches suggested by Merriam, 1989 and Goetz & LeComptre, (1984). These data were then analyzed deductively to test those patterns. Additionally, an on-task behavior rate was established for each class over the course of the observations.

At the end of each year, both EXCEL and non-EXCEL students and teachers were interviewed using open-ended protocols. The protocols were designed to test patterns that emerged during the observations, and to gain additional data. Finally, the student performance data discussed earlier, including SAT/ACT test scores, cumulative and semester grade point averages, and writing samples were also analyzed to substantiate emerging patterns.

The triangulation method (Denzin, 1978) allowed for the analyzes of multiple data sources. Only those findings which emerged as a result of these analyzes are reported.

The discussion by Irvine (1990) of descriptive practices within the institutional context of schools which negatively affect Black academic performance and the Follow-Through studies

of classroom climate by Soar and Soar (1979) provided useful paradigms for reporting the findings.

Irvine maintains that elements of the institutional context of schools combine to adversely affect Black children's performance. (see Figure 1) These factors include a curriculum which stresses "knowledge, attitudes, norms, rules, rituals, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through structure, policies, processes, formal content, and the social relationships of school." (p.5) These include subtle messages related to teacher and administrator power, racial and gender stereotypes, classism and teacher favoritism. Irvine maintains that this "hidden curriculum" often reinforces society's prejudicial view that Black children, particularly low-income Black children, are incapable and inferior.

The second component of institutional context relates to Tracking; that is the practice of placing students in homogeneous ability groups. Irvine maintains that the use of tracking guarantees the separation of children by race and cl[illegible] resulting in "the maintenance and reproduction of a system of social and economic stratification."

The disproportionate use of severe disciplinary practices is the final component of Irvine's discussion of institutional context. She reports that black children, especially Black males are two to five times more likely to be suspended from school. Further, the criteria for suspension are more often subjective (reflecting teacher or administrator judgment) rather than objective (Eyler, Cook, and Ward, 1982, as cited in Irvine). Indeed, "black students are suspended not because they commit serious offenses but because they do not get along with a particular teacher" (National Coalition of Advocates for Children, 1987, as cited in Irvine).

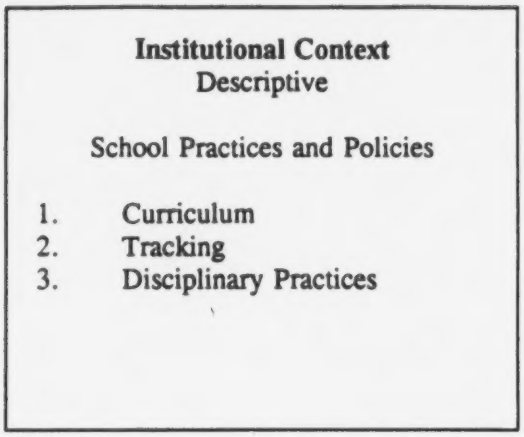

Figure 1.

Soar & Soar Paradigm

In their follow-through studies of elementary students, Soar & Soar suggest that a greater degree of teacher control, structuring and positive affect are required for low SES pupils and negative affect is more dysfunctional for the same groups.

The paradigm concentrates on separate domains in the learning environment of the classroom. These are: emotional climate, separated into positive and negative affect; and teacher management (or control) of pupil behavior, learning tasks, and thinking processes.

Classrooms with a positive emotional tone may be tightly organized and controlled by the teacher or may have little organization or direction.

The negative classroom may be one in which negative affect and criticism are employed as controlling strategies. Conversely, it may also be the classroom in which teacher displays of anger never result in enough order to teach.

Pupil behavior includes such activities as amount of physical movement, fluidity of groupings and socialization; learning tasks refer to the degree of teacher control over the choice and conduct of learning tasks; and thinking processes include pupil freedom to explore ideas and the cognitive level of interaction. Each of these areas of teacher management is further separated into the dimensions of pupil freedom and the extent to which the freedom is a result of established structure, and internalization of rules and procedures by students, or by interaction with the teacher (Soar & Soar, 1976).

Using the Soar & Soar paradigm in concert with Irvine's description of institutional context, the authors focused on observable behavior in both the EXCEL and regular classrooms to examine the relationship between classroom climate and academic self-esteem.

While data were collected detailing both the foreign language and English experiences of EXCEL students, the findings presented in this paper focus exclusively on the English classes in EXCEL and in the two high schools.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are organized into three categories. They include: Philosophy of Teaching, Emotional Climate, and Classroom Management. Data are reported for the Excel English teacher (Margaret) and the three College Preparatory English teachers (one from high school A and two from high school B).

Descriptions of Teachers

The Excel English teacher (Margaret) had been teaching college preparatory high school English for fifteen years in both the Knoxville City and Knox County School systems. She is a small, middle-aged, Black woman who has received several teaching awards.

School A:

There are two college preparatory classes in which Excel students are enrolled. The first of these is comprised of 23 students (11 females and 12 males), all of whom are Black. Four Excel students are in this class.

The teacher (Bob) is a white male, in his mid-twenties who has been teaching for only two years. He is slight of build, clean-shaven, and wears glasses. He is soft-spoken and gentle.

The second class has 23 Black students (13 females and 20 males). Three of the students are Excel participants.

In this class, the teacher (Ruth) is a Black female, never married, in her early sixties, who retired the following year. She is medium height (5'5"), heavyset, with short hair and Ben Franklin reading glasses. One of the informants in the school characterized this teacher as "one of only two teachers at the school who had her students under control." A non-Excel interviewee stated that he did not want to have this teacher for English because he knew what she was like.

School B

The enrollment of students at this school has been steadily declining. Currently, there is only a population of 400 students.

The college preparatory class observed has only 9 students (3 Black males, 1 White male, 2 Black females, and 3 white females). Three of the females (2 Whites and I Black) were Excel students.

The teacher (Connie) is a middle-aged Black woman, 5'7" with medium length hair. She is very soft-spoken, with a face which changes expressions easily (smiles, grimaces), and a friendly manner.

Philosophy of Teaching

Margaret (Excel teacher)

Margaret's stated philosophy of teaching was "fashioned from what I didn't get in my own education." Margaret saw herself as "woefully underprepared for academia". Because of this, her current goal is to give a student "much more than he/(she) needs" and to "accept nothing less than the best the student has to offer." She sees the role of the teacher as analogous to a "walking witness... who gives the best she's got; teaching by example."

For Margaret, the responsibility of a teacher is to teach not only theories or principles, but more importantly, their application or use in practice. In addition to academic concepts, a teacher "helps students see the utilitarian purpose of learning, instills values, including reverence for honesty, integrity, racial pride and diversity...."

Bob (College Preparatory Teacher - High School A)

Bob emphasized his belief that the students were able to learn but had never been motivated to do so. He wanted to instill in them a "love of English", just as one of his own high school English teachers had done for him. In fact, he mentioned that he became a teacher to do the same thing for students. "I want to make this class come alive for the students."

Ruth (College Preparatory Teacher - High School B)

Ruth believed that students had to be "made" to perform in school. "You can't handle people (students) by treating them nice." "You can't get away from the Devil; he's part of you

and a part of me." The teacher also used instruction to teach moral lessons. For example, on one occasion the moral lesson was about marriage and commitment. Ruth accused the students of not believing in marriage but of thinking that "commitment meant shacking up."

She also wanted the students to know about college and what to expect there. During one observation in which the students had been complaining about the research papers on which they were working, Ruth noted:

> I'm hearing you saying, "I can't do (this level) of work." Is that what you're saying?....The basic problem is that you're doing everything else. You say you're going to college? Then you'd better stop letter other people and other things take you away from what you are supposed to do.

Connie (College Preparatory Teacher - High School B)

Connie's philosophy was more difficult to identify. She generally allowed the students more freedom, beginning class consistently five minutes late because of xeroxing materials. However, this did not affect discipline. Students talked quietly or completed other work at their desks until she arrived.

The teacher maintained a low-key approach to instruction, involving students in the discussions. While Connie never raised her voice, there were no discipline problems. Discussions were orderly, with the focus on factual information rather than hypothesis-testing.

She also involved students in more individual assignments, like research papers, in which she acted as facilitator rather than direct instructor.

Emotional Climate

The emotional climate in the EXCEL Program was described (by the teacher, EXCEL students, and the observer) as neither warm nor cold nor positive or negative. Margaret described her relationships with students as good, but not "buddy-buddy." She reported that all

students respect her--some may fear her. She did not feel that students see her as "perky", "sweet", or "soft-spoken", but rather as business like. She stated that she maintained a professional distance and reflected that she and her students could "have fun -- laugh, and even cry sometimes." To illustrate this, she remarked that students often "hang around" after school and share jokes with her. She quickly added, however, that she insisted these same students refrain from telling jokes during class. Student interviews and classroom observations supported Margaret's contention that conversations were limited to discussions of academic tasks. Students commented that the teacher's attitude was "strictly business."

Both interviews and the classroom observations revealed that teacher-student and student-teacher respect prevailed. Margaret called students, not by their first name, rather as Miss (last name). Students most often used "Yes, Ma'am," or other terms of respect.

Teacher interviews, student interviews, and classroom observations confirmed that Margaret rarely used praise or rewards as positive reinforcement. Margaret, herself, reported only being satisfied when she got the best students had to offer, and that rarely came. In contrast, a negative classroom climate was not supported by the data. Margaret seldom used the word "no," or told students they had done poorly. She simply had them keep working on an assignment until it met her standard of acceptability (the best they had to give).

Bob

The climate in this classroom was very casual. Bob tolerated conversation and noise (For example, when starting small group work one day, he told the students, "I know you have to talk, but don't get rowdy!"). Despite this freedom, the teacher was definitely in control.

Bob seemed to genuinely like the students. Rather than an authority figure, he acted more like a friend, a buddy, or a coach (Bob did coach the girl's baseball team and at least one of the students in the class was on his baseball team). One example of this "coaching style" was the day Bob had the students call out together like a "cheering squad" the parts of speech for sentences written on the board.

During the poetry lessons, he expected students to interpret the poetry and not just memorize it. He emphasized that he used literature textbooks as a starting point but then collected other reading materials to challenge students. "It's possible to push Standard (College Preparatory) students without their quitting like Basic students." (However), "a standard class in this school is probably closer to what a Basic class would be in some other local high schools." Bob expressed concern about the students because these students were failing some of the assignments even though they were trying.

Ruth

Ruth expected students to understand and conform to classroom rules. She used anger and what the students termed a "preachy" style to control student behavior. Despite this, the students did not appear to be afraid nor were they always respectful. For example, there was often excess talking going on, although the teacher made it clear that she didn't want it to happen.

Ruth also made mild threats to the students, some of which she did not follow-up on. She appeared to expect the students to misbehave and "try her out". On one occasion she remarked, "Once I put you out of here, I won't let you come back until your parents come."

Despite the strict manner, the teacher appeared to have a positive effect on students. One day, a former college preparatory student, then in graduate school stopped in to visit. He asked permission to address the class and gave the following statement.

> How many of you all are planning to go to college? (Most hands went up). Well, what you learn from Miss Z will help you. We had to write a lot of papers in college and the stuff Miss Z taught me kept me from flunking out. Here you have one book every six weeks..in college you have one book a week. You'll like Miss Z after you graduate.

Connie

The students in Connie's college preparatory class all seemed to be very quiet and well-behaved. In fact, Connie told the observer that this was one of the quietest groups she had ever had. She described them as "extremely well-behaved and diligent in their work. "In this class, you have students who are interested in doing well." " This group is very different from (those) in previous years because they are not very vocal or disruptive."

Connie employed certain routines that students learn earlier in the year. For example, she handed out lists of vocabulary words at the beginning of the semester so that students knew their vocabulary words for a particular week.

During tests, students were expected to sit in alternate rows of desks with an empty desk between them, to prevent copying.

Connie was flexible about the schedule, willingly adapting it if she felt it would enhance the students' ability to perform well. For example, if a test on a certain unit was scheduled for a certain day but the students expressed doubt about their readiness on the day, she would postpone the test a day and spend an extra day reviewing.

Classroom Management (Organization of Instruction)

Findings on classroom management consisted of three dimensions - control of pupil behavior, control of learning tasks, and control of thinking processes. In this section of the paper, the researchers present findings related to how the teachers organize learning and thinking tasks as well as pupil behavior.

Margaret

Control of Pupil Behavior

Data from teacher interviews, student interviews, and classroom observation suggested that Margaret exerted tight control on student behavior. Margaret reported that she controls behavior by modeling her philosophy of teaching/learning as strictly business, determining where students sat, and the provision of "more than enough meaningful things to do." The students interviewed reported that they would rarely consider inappropriate behavior. Several characterized the class as always busy, stating that "it's all work." Classroom observations supported the teacher and student interviews. To control behavior, Margaret was well prepared for class, with all tools (pens, pencils, papers, calculator, and watch) carefully placed on the desk. She began class two minutes early each day, by handing out homework and seatwork and describing the activities for the day. Most often, she continued class for one or two minutes past the allotted time.

Classroom observations placed EXCEL students in the category "Definitely on Task," 92% of the time they spent in class. When off-task behaviors did occur, the teacher refused to acknowledge the behavior directly. Instead she quietly called out the student's name. In each instance, the off-task behavior stopped immediately. Margaret suggested that the lack of

behavior problems resulted from her refusal to deviate from established rules. Before establishing a rule, she carefully considered the possibilities, never developing a rule that could not be uniformly enforced.

One critical rule identified in all three data sources was the unacceptability of incomplete or inappropriately prepared assignments. Students reported that Margaret refused to accept excuses for failure to complete assignments. This was confirmed by the classroom observations in which students refrained from turning in incomplete or late assignments. The behavior suggests that students had internalized this rule and were acting upon it.

Bob

Bob was perceived by the students to be in control. A male in the class voluntarily shared with the interviewer that even though it might not look like it, this College Prep teacher really was in control of the classroom. He said that at the beginning of the year, the students doubted that this teacher was in control. To test, this student deliberately disrupted the class. Bob sent him to the office.

Bob used a combination of different types of tests, with emphasis on essay tests in order to help students prepare for college. He mentioned that the students had some trouble with the first essay test of the year, but after that first test, they knew what he was expecting and they did well on subsequent essay tests.

Occasionally, Bob noticed that a student was not paying attention to the lesson, he would call on the student to get him/her to answer a question. He did not expect these students to answer. In one case, he pointed out that the students would be able to answer if they had been paying attention. To illustrate, Bob called on someone who was able to answer.

If a student was really trying to answer but was unable to do so correctly, Bob would probe until the student had the whole answer. One time, after it had taken several probing questions to get the correct answer from a student, he added enthusiastically, "See! I knew you could do it!"

Ruth

Ruth encouraged classroom discussions which were lively and animated. She asked students for their opinions and tried to get them to the relate the literature they were studying to contemporary problems and issues.

Some of the lessons were very structured. For example, Ruth gave very exact instructions on the form and procedure the students were to use for their research papers. Bob volunteered to the observer that he wished later he had used a more structured approach to the research paper because his students didn't understand some of the basics he presented in his "loose, creative way."

When the group was reading Lord of the Flies one chapter per evening, Ruth gave an objective quiz at the beginning of each period to see who was reading the material. Ruth did this because some of the students could get enough from the class discussions, without reading the book, to pass the final examination. In discussions of Mallory's King Arthur, Ruth would read aloud the passages and then lead a discussion for understanding of the difficult material. She also distributed additional background material on the period during class and then tested the students on it before they left. Her comments about tests included, "We need to start learning for permanence...not just for the test."

Connie

At the time of the observation, the class was studying "Julius Caesar". The students were assigned to read one section, that section was discussed, then listened to as it was read by a professional actor. Later, the students were quizzed on the section and eventually took a final examination on the entire play.

Discussions were conducted by the teacher, who generally stood near the middle of the room holding the literature book. Students did not raise their hands with answers to questions, just calling them out, usually very timidly. Sometimes the answers were so soft that Connie had to ask them to speak louder. When students started to answer, the teacher would look at them in recognition. Sometimes she would probe with more questions to get them to give a more complete answer. There was little verbal reinforcement for correct answers..the discussion just proceeded. If the students did not want to participate, they did not have to respond at all.

Students were free to ask questions at any time. One student asked the meaning of a term ("omen") during the final test. The teacher answered, "Hmm, we talked about that yesterday." However, she went on to explain the word.

Control of Learning Tasks & Thinking Process

To control learning tasks in the English class, Margaret employed a variety of techniques which included:

a. Active Teacher Instruction/Discussion. Less than 20% of the instructional time was spent in activities other than teacher directed instruction, lecture, demonstration, or discussion. At no time were students given a worksheet to do in class. All seatwork was confined to homework. Each homework assignment was either checked and discussed or returned graded

for discussion. When working on writing assignments/papers, students spent time re-writing, editing, or enhancing work that had been corrected by the teacher. Students did not engage in small group activities without teacher direction. Margaret reported that her job was to teach during the entire class period, and to make each assignment meaningful.

b. Equal Participation of Students. Margaret frequently questioned students to evaluate their mastery of a subject. She insisted that everyone be involved and facilitated this by asking questions. Data from classroom observations confirmed this strategy as all students participated equally. In all but two classes observed, Margaret directed nearly identical numbers of questions to each of her students during a lesson.

c. Individualized and Variable Learning Experiences. During the teacher interviews, Margaret candidly admitted to pressing students until she got the best they had to give. This individualization of instruction was not achieved by differences in assignments, but rather by the amount/quality of the work she expected from each student.

Control of Thinking Process

a. Higher-order Questioning Technique. Margaret also reported in interviews that students must not only know a theory or practice, but must understand and apply it as well. In the classroom observations, Margaret often said, "And the next question is..." and the students would reply, "Why?" This method of questioning was used during grammar and vocabulary lessons, as well as in discussions of literature.

b. Wait-time. Margaret paused each time she asked a question to allow students to think before they responded. These pauses lasted on average from one to five seconds before the question was rephrased. The teacher encouraged students to think by indicating verbally the

acceptability of "thinking time." With reluctant students, Margaret probed until the students provided an answer. At no time did Margaret permit students to "opt out" of participation. She stressed that the only acceptable answer was no answer. Further, she reiterated in class and in the interviews, that all students had a contribution to make, and that their opinions/input were valid and important.

c. **Absence of the Word, "No."** At no time were students told they had given the wrong answer. If answers were incorrect, the teacher probed for the reason a student gave a particular answer until the student self-corrected. Margaret stated that she considered self-correction a learning process which should be directly addressed during instruction. If answers were incomplete, she pressed for clarification by rephrasing, asking leading questions or giving clues. She also sought other students' input to improve the quality of the answers, particularly in literature discussions. Margaret indicated correct or complete answers by changing the tone and volume of her voice as she repeated or summarized answers.

Bob

On several occasions Bob was observed trying to teach the students to think for themselves. For example, during a grammar lesson, he told the students, "It's important that when I call on James that James answer. If we all holler the answers out, he doesn't have to think."

A few minutes later, he reprimanded a female student who got confused and stopped in the middle of her answer when another student interrupted. Bob used probing questions until the student finished her answer then he added, "Ok, Jovetta. You were saying that until Timmy said "No" and then you stopped.

During the same lesson, Bob found an example in the grammar textbook with which he disagreed. He pointed out to the students that they should read critically, not accepting without question everything they found in books.

To encourage creativity, Bob offered extra credit for student-generated posters about parts of speech. Another time, he used word puzzles for students to solve for extra credit.

Bob also used brainstorming and small group discussions to help students choose topics for their research papers. He also told them that in addition to correct form and solid research he wanted their papers to "have their personality in them too."

Ruth

In addition to the structured lessons discussed earlier, Ruth also encouraged creativity among the students. One example of this was an assignment to create a personal "coat of arms" and research the symbolism behind it.

Discussions in the class were animated and not low-key. Although some students did not participate, those who did appeared very involved. Students were asked to supply their opinions about things. On another occasion, she asked them to compare the theme of a TV program shown the previous evening with the theme in the section of "King Arthur" they were reading.

A few times Ruth called on students who had not volunteered to participate. Once she said that she would call on those "whose hands were too heavy to lift." Despite these strategies, if students did not want to participate they were not forced to do so.

Connie

The daily quizzes which accompanied the unit on "Julius Caesar" were xeroxed either from the literature book or from some workbook. And the final examination included questions

that had been used on previous quizzes.

Connie used questions which focused on memorization skills rather than hypothesis testing. For example, on the final exam, questions included "Match the speaker with his lines...define the following words, soliloquy, stoic, soothsayer, etc., and What were the three decisions made by the conspirators during their meeting at Brutus' house?

While Connie maintained a quiet order in the classroom and later in the library, students worked without much teacher assistance. Emphasis was on direct teaching, answering factual questions, and on-task behavior.

DISCUSSION

The data indicate a close congruence between Margaret's stated philosophy of teaching and practices in the classroom. This was confirmed in the classroom observations and interviews with Pilot Project Excel and Excel student. Ruth and Bob also demonstrated congruence between their stated philosophy of teaching and the practices they used in the classroom. In the case of the third classroom teacher, Connie, the data are less conclusive.

The student interviews suggested that Margaret's philosophy of teaching and practices resulted in the development of an academic self-esteem for the Excel participants. The findings further suggested that high teacher expectations and appropriate role-modeling produced work from the students which demonstrated abilities beyond their own expectations. The realization of these abilities significantly influenced the development of academic self-esteem in the EXCEL students.

College-Preparatory Teachers (Bob, Connie, Ruth)

Ruth and Bob also demonstrated congruence between their stated philosophies of teaching and the practices they used in the classroom. In the case of the third classroom teacher, Connie, the data are less conclusive. To a greater or lesser degree, Bob and Ruth attempted to engage the students in creative activities and to empower them through such discussion techniques as probing questions, brainstorming sessions, and comparisons of knowledge gained from their own experiences and that gained from the literature or poetry read.

Connie's selection of teaching techniques suggests an interest in retention of specific information rather than the development of higher order thinking skills. Her students were given more companion assignments taken from the textbook or teacher's manual. In addition, aside from the research paper, few units required students to use inductive or deductive reasoning skills.

EXCEL Pupil Behavior

During the three years of observations, the students in Excel have exhibited an average of between 92 - 96% on-task rate in Margaret's English classes. At no point during the three year period was there less than 80% on task behavior. In contrast, in all three college preparatory classes observed, the on-task rates averaged less than 50% with the same subjects. At on point were the on-task behavior rates for these three classes at 90%.

Margaret also set high standards for the students which she enforced in responding to their written and oral work. While Ruth and Bob held high standards for the students, only Ruth actualized those standards in responding to students' written work. Bob wanted to encourage students and rarely graded them down on an assignment if they were trying. Students only

wrote extensively on the research paper for Connie. All other measures required only brief responses.

Margaret, Bob and Ruth used probing questions to get students to give more detailed answers and all three used wait-time to allow students the opportunity to respond to questions.

CONCLUSIONS

The causal relationships that explain linkages between teacher behavior and student achievement are not always clear: and even when they are, process-product relationships do not translate directly into prescriptions for teaching practice. In the case of correlations between teacher behaviors and achievement, positive correlations do not necessarily indicate that the teacher behavior should be maximized (even within the observed range, let alone the theoretical range).

These quantifiers notwithstanding, two common themes cut across these findings. One is that academic learning is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic tasks. The second is that students learn more efficiently when their teachers first structure new information for them and help them to relate it to what they already know, and then monitor their performance and provide corrective feedback during recitation, drill, practice, or application activities.

In the case of the Project Excel teacher, both current and past students recognized her as a significant contributor to their education. The data also suggest that these students were engaging in teacher-directed and guided activities which would facilitate the construction of personal definitions of scholarship. Pupil development of academic self-esteem seems to be generated through a combination of factors including a congruence between stated philosophy

and methods of operation, high standards established by the teachers for themselves in conjunction with high standards and expectations for the students.

Our data further suggest that Excel pupil on-task behavior in the college preparatory classes in both high schools was significantly lower. Additional observations will need to be conducted in these settings to provide further insight into the impact of teacher behavior on the development of academic self-esteem.

Ernest Boyer (1983) suggested that effective schools were those with a sense of purpose and a shared vision that when beyond what was accomplished in one classroom or even in one school year. This vision also had to exceed school discipline and be more significant than Carnegie units (p. 66).

Equal diligence will be required of those who provide pre-college enrichment opportunities if the rumors of inferiority are to be dispelled for Black adolescents.

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